



March 11, 2021

Hon. Anthony Portantino, Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: SUPPORT SB 15 {Portantino} As Amended 3/8/21**

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Livable California, a nonprofit organization of more than 10,000 followers that advocates for empowerment of local governments to foster equitable, livable communities and truly affordable housing, supports SB 15 [Portantino].

We strongly support SB 15, which provides incentives to increase affordable housing by enabling cities and counties to voluntarily rezone and reuse idled shopping centers and big-box retail buildings for residential use. We support the bill for the following reasons:

- SB 15 would establish a state-funded grant program for local governments administered via HCD. The grants would encourage cities to shift to housing on such sites by supplying funds to municipalities for seven years to replace lost sales taxes from the commercial use of SB 15 sites.
- Under SB 15, cities would agree to allow affordable housing “by right,” while still overseeing design review.
- This bill is based on reuse of idled buildings, which studies by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and others show generates significantly less greenhouse gas than demolition and replacement of old buildings, even if the new replacement building adheres to LEED standards. We welcome this promising approach to battling GHG.

Idled retail sites along major commercial boulevards could be repurposed for mixed-use commercial and housing without destroying homes and displacing residential neighborhoods. Globally recognized California urban planner Peter Calthorpe is leading this movement, and his mapping of the Bay Area has identified commercial sites that could accommodate more than 2 million housing units.

Livable California urges your committee to strongly support SB 15. With telecommuting and other fundamental changes resulting from COVID-19, we see SB 15 as possibly the most important piece of housing legislation this session.

We applaud state Sen. Portantino for his foresight and vision. If signed into law, this bill's incentives could play a major role in enabling cities and counties to provide significant opportunities for affordable housing.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors of Livable California

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "RH", written over a horizontal line.

Rick Hall, President

T Keith Gurnee, Member

Carey White, Member

Isaiah Madison, Member

cc. Senator Anthony Portantino